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The Leaning Object: April 2009

John C. Owens

NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

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Perspectives

March 25-27 the IANR Life Sciences External Review Team was on campus to focus on the molecular life sciences.

If you interacted with the review team, attended the open forum, or provided support in preparing for the review, I thank you.

Perhaps you were among those faculty and staff who reviewed the IANR life sciences self-study online, and provided feedback. Your insightful comments helped hone key messages synthesized in the following italicized statements. *IANR and its faculty are:*

- *successfully integrating research, teaching, and extension;*
- *effectively advancing knowledge along the continuum from fundamental research to application and education necessary to meet the current and emerging needs of the state;*
- *preparing graduates who are well positioned to pursue Ph.D.s or to enter the workforce;*
- *using resources effectively and giving a great return on the investment across all the functions of the land-grant university mission;*
- *developing and implementing research projects and programs that are reviewed for quality and relevance;*
- *enhancing the value and the impact of life sciences research by involving social and human sciences;*
- *developing and implementing research and education programs that engage scientists across the UNL campus and beyond; and*
- *key players in biofuels.*

Our self-study made clear, and comments enforced, the notion that to make land-grant university science most useful and relevant, it must be a seamless continuum that reaches from the most fundamental discoveries through application.

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John C. Owens
NU Vice President and
Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

The Leading Object

*The Morrill Act of 1862
established a Land Grant University
in each state where
The Leading Object
would be instruction
in agriculture and related fields.*



April 2009

Vegetable gardening becomes a focus on 'Backyard Farmer'

The longest-running non-syndicated television program in the nation kicked off its 56th season earlier this month.

"Backyard Farmer" returned to the air April 2 for another season of educational yard and garden information. This year will focus on two themes, one of them continued from last year, said producer Brad Mills.

The show will continue its "green" theme from last year while focusing on growing vegetables — a practice more people are thought to be doing because of higher food costs, Mills said. Vegetable growing was emphasized in the first year of "Backyard Farmer" but given little attention since then.

"Because of the economy we're going to return to the focus on growing vegetables in the home garden," he said. "The time is right for us to spend more time and attention on that."

Regular vegetable segments will focus on a garden grown behind Keim Hall on the UNL East Campus, Mills said.

The show's green segments will again focus on how to save water, composting, and other environmentally friendly practices.

"Backyard Farmer" also has unveiled a new Web site, <http://byf.unl.edu>, which offers more written questions and answers than before. People interested in seeing show videos are encouraged to go to UNL's section on iTunes U, where podcasts can be downloaded. Weekly video features also can be found on the



'Backyard Farmer' panelists are spending more time this year discussing vegetable gardening.

"Backyard Farmer" channel at <http://www.youtube.com/bucslim>.

"We want to help people get information on their specific question," Mills said.

"Backyard Farmer" began in 1952 and has continued as a live weekly call-in show dedicated to answering the questions of Nebraska gardeners. The show will again be hosted by Kim Todd, landscape horticulture specialist.

Fred Baxendale, extension entomologist and the show's longest-running panelist having started in 1985, also returns this season.

"Over the years, 'Backyard Farmer' programming has been creative and dynamic," Baxendale said.

"Backyard Farmer" is broadcast live at 7 p.m. central time Thursday nights from April through September on the NET network. "Backyard Farmer Extra," in which additional questions are answered, will continue on Saturday mornings.

— Lori McGinnis

Perspectives *(continued from page 1)*

All parts of the IANR continuum flow are designed to create synergies not achievable when related functions and disciplines are segregated.

New knowledge developed through research is taught in on-campus classrooms and laboratories, as well as across Nebraska through extension education. This provides a coordinated interaction between fundamental discoveries and development, which then leads to application. Possibilities and problems detected during development and application are looped back to the more fundamental researchers for additional work.

That's good for research and education. Most importantly, it's good for Nebraska.

Biochemist Eugene Sander, vice president for outreach and dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona, chaired the external review committee. He was joined by:

Kirby Barrick, dean, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Florida; Fuller Bazer, animal science

professor, Texas A&M University; Deborah Delmer, plant biology professor emeritus, University of California, Davis; Michael Mullen, associate dean for academic programs, College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky; R. Michael Roberts, animal sciences division, University of Missouri; Patrick Schnable, associate director, Plant Sciences Institute, Iowa State University; Steven A. Slack, director, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, Ohio State University. We look forward to receiving the team's report.

I am told that at the review team's exit interview, team members were complimentary of our faculty and work, and gave high marks to the action plan process IANR uses.

Through that ongoing action plan process, faculty help identify needed interdisciplinary research that builds on IANR life sciences strengths. In keeping with our strategic plan, we then look to fill gaps or complement existing or emerging life sciences-related research strengths through key faculty hires that position us to

respond to Nebraska's needs while increasing competitiveness in specific areas.

Ideally, these areas will attract industry partners interested in an Innovation Campus presence at UNL.

Our faculty submitted proposals with timelines and budgets to engage national experts to be part of assessing and (or) validating current and future research gaps and capacity. Of six proposals submitted last December for implementation this spring, four have been funded, and two were encouraged to further develop proposals. Since then, additional proposals have been encouraged.

Providing molecular life sciences research and education key to our state's success and sustainability is one of the many ways IANR is at work for Nebraska.



Economics of water topic of conference

The economics of water was to be the focus of the sixth annual Water Law, Policy and Science conference in Lincoln.

This year's April 29-30 conference on water science and economics was to bring together faculty and students, state policymakers, employees of water agencies, attorneys, and members of the general public interested in water issues, said Lorie Benson, assistant director of the Water Center, which is an event cosponsor.

Most of the conference attendees are from Nebraska, although it does draw some from other states, she said.

Each year anywhere from 100 to 250 people attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln conference to hear nationally known experts, Benson said. Several 2009 conference sessions were planned on water marketing and banking, as well as a popular track on water law, featured for the first time in 2008.

Managing Tough Times Web site launched

As Nebraskans struggle through difficult economic times, IANR has provided a Web-based tool it hopes will help. And people are logging in.

The Managing in Tough Times Web site contains a vast array of information to help Nebraskans know how to best cope with economic difficulties in a variety of areas. It can be found at <http://toughtimes.unl.edu>.

The site was created to help people who are finding times difficult for them right now, said Kathleen Lodl, assistant dean of extension.

"What we wanted to do was help Nebraska families get resources that are the best the university has to offer," Lodl said.

The site contains newly-developed material as well as existing resources such as NebGuides, Web sites and interactive information. Topics addressed include families and relationships, livestock and crop production, home and food, and

money-saving ideas.

Response to the site has been fantastic, Lodl said.

"We're getting great feedback. We've had 1,500 hits a week."

The site has been publicized in area newspapers and television stations and has even been reported in USA Today. Several media outlets put a link to the site on their own Web sites. Many site viewers have requested additional information, Lodl said.

This is the only site available with Nebraska-specific information available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Lodl said.

"There seems to be a need for this from individual families, and we'll continue to put up new information," Lodl said.

Need to meet with the

Vice President/Vice Chancellor?

Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.*

John C. Owens

NU Vice President for
Agriculture and Natural Resources
and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR

202 Ag Hall • (402) 472-2871

*Occasionally Dr. Owens will be called away on University business.

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103 ACB, 0918; via e-mail (lmcginnis2@unl.edu) or via fax (402-472-0025).

Erwin transfers ag education into banking career

The field of animal science is quite different from running a bank, but Steve Erwin knows his agricultural education has proved invaluable in his banking career.

Erwin, regional president of U.S. Bank, says his agricultural education at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln helped him initially get into the banking industry at Omaha National Bank many years ago.

“Omaha National Bank hired me because I knew something about agriculture,” said Erwin, a 1975 animal science graduate.

Erwin grew up on a farm near Concord and majored in animal science because he had always worked with livestock on the farm. His first job after college graduation was working with the Norfolk Livestock Auction Market. For two years he traveled northeast Nebraska soliciting farmers to sell their livestock at the auction.

Although he had not intended in college to get into the banking profession, Erwin’s next job was just that. He became an Omaha National bank officer working with smaller banks. The job gave him a taste of the industry, which he continued to pursue throughout his career.

His knowledge of banking wasn’t strong at the time he started.

“They felt they could teach me about the banking side,” he said.

However, his agricultural experience was appealing, he said,

because people with that knowledge are needed in banks.

Three years after starting with Omaha National he took a job with Northwestern National Bank in Omaha. Three years later he became president of First National Bank of Chadron, then eight years after that he moved back to Omaha and took a position with FirstTier Bank, which later became U.S. Bank.

As regional president, Erwin heads operations of all 56 U.S. Bank offices in Nebraska and in Council Bluffs, Iowa. U.S. Bank is headquartered in Minneapolis and operates in 24 states.

He met many of his current colleagues at UNL.

“College was a great experience because you have the opportunity to meet so many people. Lots of friends and business associates are people I went to school with,” Erwin said.

His agricultural education helped him enter the banking industry and is still important to him today, he said.

– Lori McGinnis



Steve Erwin

IANR molecular life sciences report being finalized

The final version of the IANR Life Sciences External Review Committee report is expected to be in the hands of University of Nebraska–Lincoln Chancellor Harvey Perlman by the end of April, according to the committee chair.

Eugene Sander, vice president for outreach and dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona, said in mid-April that the eight members of the review committee were finalizing edits on their recommendations.

At Perlman’s request the review team visited UNL March 25-27 to review molecular life sciences within IANR’s academic and research programs. The review committee also looked at the College of Arts and Sciences and other aspects of the university, in identifying areas within the molecular biosciences “that with a little extra work could become world-class,” Sander said.

Review team members spoke with administrators and faculty to garner ideas on how to further synergy and collaboration between UNL’s east and city campuses. The review team will propose some transitional models and suggestions, from which Perlman and NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor John Owens may opt to select those that could work well in Nebraska.

Change will take time, Sander said, and no one model can fit every state.

“Serving Nebraska and Nebraskans is different than serving Arizona and Arizonans,” he said. “The committee’s end goal is to



Susan Fritz, IANR associate vice chancellor, and Alan Moeller, right, IANR assistant vice chancellor, visit with Eugene Sander of the University of Arizona in late March. Sander headed an eight-member committee that conducted an external review of IANR’s molecular life sciences academic and research programs.

Brett Hampton

provide the best possible insight we could in terms of advising based on our experiences at other universities.”

“Everyone was very gracious and we were treated nicely,” Sander added. “It was a good experience.”

When made public the review team’s report is expected to be available for viewing at <http://ianrhome.unl.edu/strategicplan>.

Three IANR faculty receive major systemwide awards

Three faculty in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources have received the University of Nebraska's most prestigious awards for teaching, research, and engagement.

The three include two professors in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources: Donald Weeks, Maxcy professor in the Department of Biochemistry, and Donald Lee of the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture; and Michael James, professor in the Department of Textiles, Clothing and Design in the College of Education and Human Sciences.

Weeks won the Innovation, Development and Entrepreneurship Award, which recognizes faculty who have a direct

impact on the economic, cultural, and educational life of the state.

Weeks has been recognized nationally for pioneering work in plant biochemistry and biotechnology. His research on dicamba-resistant crops has the potential to significantly increase productivity for farmers around the world.

Lee received the Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award, which recognizes faculty for sustained records of excellence in teaching.

Lee was honored for his leadership in teaching plant biology, genetics, and biotechnology to undergraduates. A national leader in distance education and

Web-based instruction, Lee has been nationally recognized for his teaching by the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Science Society of America.

James was an Outstanding Research and Creative Activity recipient. As an artist who works with quilts, James' works have been shown in the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution and several other museums and galleries. He is a fellow of the American Craft Council and was recognized with the Governor's Arts Award as Nebraska's 2008 Visual Artist of the Year.

The awards were announced in late March and were to be presented at an April 27 luncheon.



Donald Weeks



Donald Lee



Michael James

Three receive OEA recognition

Three employees in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources have received outstanding employee awards.

Debra Loudon, agricultural research technician at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, received the award for office/service staff for March. Nominators wrote she is a "versatile employee" who has "demonstrated sustained excellence in all she does."



Debra Loudon

William Rathje, research technician at the South Central Agricultural Laboratory in Clay Center, received the award for office/service staff for April. A nominator wrote he has been "a key contributor to a very productive irrigation research program at SCAL."

Trisha Dezort, personnel coordinator in IANR's finance and personnel office, received



William Rathje

the award for managerial/professional staff for May and June. A nominator wrote that under her leadership, "IANR's human resources support is functioning at a higher level and continues to progress."

Loudon, Rathje, and Dezort will receive a cash award of \$350, a certificate, and a lapel pin.



Trisha Dezort

Booker, Wegulo recipients of Dinsdale awards

William Booker, extension educator based in Alliance, and Stephen Wegulo, assistant professor in plant pathology, have received the 2008 Dinsdale Family Faculty Awards.

The Dinsdale awards are given to untenured faculty who have demonstrated a commitment to academic excellence. They are named after Roy Dinsdale, a 1948 University of Nebraska alumnus who provided the funds for the award.

Booker's primary focus is dryland and irrigated crops such as sunflower, corn, sugar beats, dry beans, alfalfa, and wheat. He also is responsible for the agronomics and market development for biodiesel and human consumption of alternative crops including sunflower, canola, and

camelina. From 2004 to 2005, the number of sunflower acres planted in Nebraska increased 168 percent.

Wegulo is a field crop pathologist responsible for detecting and managing diseases affecting small grains, forages, and ornamentals. In his applied wheat research, his findings on application rates and timing of fungicides to control foliar diseases and on integrated management of Fusarium head blight will save producers about \$10 million annually. He and his collaborators have obtained more than \$1.1 million in research grants.

Booker and Wegulo have worked together on extension wheat projects in the Panhandle.



William Booker



Stephen Wegulo

Henneman receives ACE award

Alice Henneman, UNL Extension educator based in Lancaster County, has received the 2008 Communicator of the Year award from the Nebraska chapter of the Association of Communication Excellence (ACE) in Agricultural, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences.

Nebraska ACE recognizes an IANR faculty or staff member who communicates clearly and displays exceptional expertise and professionalism in promotion, publications, news, and technology.

Henneman, who has been with UNL since 1980, educates in the area of nutrition and food safety.



Alice Henneman